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All perfect praise be to Allaah, The Lord of the Worlds. I testify that there is none worthy of worship except Allaah, and that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger, may Allaah exalt his mention as well as that of his family and all his companions.

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Punishment In The Grave - Reasons Behind It, And How To Avoid It

All praise is due to Allaah, Lord of the universe, may He exalt the mention of Prophet Muhammad who was sent as a mercy for mankind.

Reasons behind the punishment in the grave

Imaam ibn Al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy upon him, dedicated a full chapter in his famous book 'Ar-Rooh' (The soul) for this issue, and he began it by stating: "One might ask: what are the reasons behind some people being punished in the grave? There are two answers, a detailed one and a summarized one:

The summarized answer is they get punished because of their ignorance concerning Allaah, their disobedience to Him and their committing what He prohibited; Allaah will not punish a soul which knew Him, loved Him, adhered to what He commanded and refrained from what He prohibited, nor will He punish the body in which such a soul was. The punishment in the grave and in the Hereafter is an indication of the wrath of Allaah upon His slave; The one who makes Allaah angry in this life and did not repent, and dies while in that state will be punished in the grave according to the extent he angered Allaah; some will be punished for a short while, and others for a long time.

The detailed answer is what the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam informed us about, when he spoke of the two men whom he saw being punished while in their graves; because one of them went around tale-bearing to cause disputes between people, and the other one was not cleaning nor purifying himself after urinating; the second one abandoned the obligatory purification, and the first one committed what causes enmity between people by the evil use of his tongue, even if what he was saying was true. In this there is an indication

that the one who causes enmity between people by lying and spreading false statements will receive a harsh punishment, and likewise, there is an indication that the one who abandons prayer will receive a harsher punishment than the one who does not purify himself after urinating, because this purification is only a precondition for praying. In another narration, he sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam informed us that one of the two who were being punished, was a person who used to backbite others."

In one of the Ahaadeeth, the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam informed us about a man in his grave who was lashed once with a whip, causing his grave to become full of fire. This was because he prayed a prayer once without being in the state of ablution, and he also once passed by an oppressed person and did not help him, although he could have done so. (At-Tahaawi).

Imaam Bukhaari, may Allaah have mercy upon him, mentioned in his book a narration by Samurah ibn Jundub, may Allaah be pleased with him, that the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam informed about the punishment of some people, like one who was punished because he used to lie and his lies became widespread among people; another used to memorize the Quran yet would sleep all night without praying, and would not apply its teachings during the day; a third group of people were those who committed adultery and fornication; another ate up the money earned from Riba (usury and interest). The Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam informed about all these types of people as he was made able to see them being punished in their graves.

In another Hadeeth, the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam told us about some people whose heads are smashed with a rock in their graves because they slept through prayers and never performed them. He sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam also told us about those who are forced to eat Zaqqoom (a plant in Hell) because they did not pay their Zakaah (obligatory charity); others have to eat foul rotten meat because they used to commit adultery and fornication; others' lips are clipped because they used to cause dispute between people during times of trials.

The Prophet sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam also told us about a man who took a garment from the war booties without informing the Prophet sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam of this, and how that resulted in the garment becoming fire which burnt him while he was in his grave.

The punishment in the grave is the result of the sins committed by the heart, the eyes, the ears, the mouth, the tongue, the stomach, the private parts, the hands, the feet, and the body as a whole. The following are some sins which bring about punishment in the grave:

- Tale-bearing, backbiting, and slandering.
- Giving false testimony.
- Causing disputes between people.
- Innovating in matters of religion.
- Talking on behalf of Allaah and His Messenger without knowledge.
- Consuming Riba (interest and usury).
- Devouring the wealth of orphans without due right.
- Dealing with bribery.
- Consuming the money of fellow Muslims, or one with whom a person has an agreement, without due right.
- Consuming intoxicants.
- Fornication, adultery, and homosexuality.
- Theft and murder.
- Deception, betrayal, and fraud.
- Usage of deception to change what is Islamically unlawful to lawful, or to prevent the performance of Islamic obligations and encourage committing of prohibitions.
- Harming Muslims and hunting for their mistakes.
- Ruling with other than what Allaah legislated, or passing Islamic rulings which differ from what Allaah prescribed and legislated.
- Assisting oppressors and evil doers.

- Incapacitating the meaning of the Names and Attributes of Allaah or disbelieving in them.
- Giving precedence to one's own opinions, tastes or politics over the Sunnah of the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, or slandering our Salaf (pious predecessors).
- Being a woman who is hired by the family of a deceased person to cry loudly upon his death, or being one of those who listen to her.
- Singing, being a musician, or being one who listens to them.
- Building mosques over graves.
- Giving less in measure to others when one is weighing, but taking more for oneself when being weighed for.
- Tyranny, arrogance, boasting, and aiding those who have such characteristics in these qualities.
- Indifference to being reminded of Allaah, but refraining from what one is doing when threatened by mere humans.
- Going to fortunetellers and magicians, and believing them.
- Not paying attention or giving importance to the words of the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, but listening and adhering to admonition from a regular human being,
- Reciting the Quran, but not being affected by it, and even becoming preoccupied by something else during it; but when listening to music, which is an introduction to adultery and the substance for hypocrisy, rejoicing and becoming excited, and even wishing that the music would never stop.
- Giving false oaths when swearing by Allaah, but being truthful when swearing by the name of one's Shaykh, father, leader or anyone else whom one loves dearly.
- Openly bragging about one's sins.
- Being untrustworthy with regards to people's wealth or honor.
- Having a licentious tongue, which causes others to avoid one for fear of his evil.
- Delaying prayer to the end of its prescribed time, then praying it hurriedly.

- Paying Zakaah resentfully and only due to coercion.
- Not performing Hajj despite being physically and financially capable.
- Not fulfilling people's due rights despite being capable of doing so.
- Not fearing Allaah in one's means of earning provisions.
- Severing ties of kinship.
- Showing no mercy to the needy, widows and orphans.
- Showing no mercy to animals.

All of the above mentioned categories of people, and others like them, will be punished in their graves on account of their crimes, each according to how much he committed. He will be punished accordingly unless he repents to Allaah and Allaah forgives him due to his repentance, or due to His general mercy upon the Muslims.

How to avoid it

Imaam ibn Al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said: "In general, refraining from what causes punishment in the grave is the best way to avoid being punished. One needs to sit for a while before he goes to bed and hold himself accountable for what he gained during that day and what he lost, then renew his sincere repentance to Allaah and sleep after having repented, and when he wakes up, be determined not to commit the same sins again. He should do this every night; if he dies that night he would die after having repented, and if he would wake up, he would wake up happy because he was delayed and given a chance to strive hard in good deeds to make up for what he missed out on. There is nothing better or more beneficial than such a way of going to sleep, especially if he follows this accountability with mentioning Allaah and follows the recommendations of Sunnah in how to go to sleep and supplicate until he falls asleep. The one whom Allaah wills good for, He will guide him to doing so."

In detail, we remind people with the Ahaadeeth of the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam which inform us about some ways which will rescue us from punishment in the grave:

- *Salmaan Al-Faarisi*, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said: “Ribaat (guarding the front lines of the Muslim army) for one day is better (in reward) than fasting for a full month and praying during its nights; and the one who dies while in that position will have the reward of the deeds he was doing to continue (until The Day of Resurrection) and he will be saved from the punishment of the grave.” (Muslim).
- One of the companions of the Prophet sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, may Allaah be pleased with him, asked the Prophet sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam: “How come all people are tried in their graves except for the martyrs?” He sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam replied: “The flashing of the swords over their heads is enough of a trial” (An-Nasaa’i).
- *Al-Miqdaad ibn Ma’d Yakrib*, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said: “The martyr has seven qualities which Allaah grants him: he will be forgiven with the first drop of his blood, he will see his seat in Paradise, he will be rescued from the punishment of the grave, he will be rescued from the Great Horror (on the Day of Resurrection), he will wear a (special) garment of faith, he will marry seventy two women of Paradise, and he will be allowed to intercede for seventy of his family.” (Ibn Maajah). In another narration he sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said: “The crown of dignity will be placed on his (i.e., the martyr's) head, each corundum (of which) is better than this world and all what it contains; he will have seventy two wives from the ladies of Paradise, and he will be allowed to intercede for seventy of his family.” (At-Tirmithi).
- *Abu Hurayrah*, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said: “There is a chapter in the Quran (Al-Mulk) that has thirty verses; it will intercede for the one who continuously recites it, until he is forgiven.” (An-Nasaa’i & Ibn Maajah). This Hadeeth, and others which carry the same meaning, prove

that those who regularly recite chapter Al-Mulk and apply what is in it, will be rescued from the punishment in the grave.

- The Prophet sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said: “The one who dies as a result of a stomach sickness will not be punished in his grave.” (At-Tirmithi). This reward will be for those who do not despair upon their sickness, but rather persevere through it and hope for the reward from Allaah.
- The Prophet sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said: “Allaah will protect from the trials in the grave, any Muslim who dies on a Friday - day or night.” (Ahmad).
- Fulfilling piety, Allaah says what means: “Verily, those who say: Our Lord is (only) Allaah, and thereafter stand firm (on the Islamic Faith of Monotheism), on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.” (Al-Ahqaf: 13).